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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BABIL: PM FORMING SUPPORT COUNCILS WITH TRIBAL
LEADERS

REF: A. BAGHDAD 2124

[1](#)B. BAGHDAD 2273

Classified By: Acting Deputy Political Counselor Michael Ma for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is a PRT Babil reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: In a July 22 meeting, Sheikh Ali Shnan disclosed to REO Hillah Deputy Team Leader (DTL) recent steps taken by Prime Minister Maliki's office to establish "Support Councils" in Babil province and throughout the country. The Babil council will consist of tribal sheikhs who were promised discretionary funds from the national government to carry out projects within the province. Supporters of the councils (such as Shnan) promote them both as a means of organizing an independent political bloc and as a method of dispensing services efficiently. Other indicators suggest, however, that councils may be the latest in a series of steps by PM Maliki and Da'wa to organize tribal sheikhs from the Southern and Central provinces for their own future electoral purposes. Shnan's information was confirmed in broad outline during a conversation between a COR member from Babil and Poloff later that day. End Summary.

Support Council

[1](#)3. (C) According to Shnan, Ahmed Hassoon and Dr. Mohammed Hussein of the Prime Minister's office met earlier in the day with nine leading tribal sheikhs from Babil province. The tribal sheikhs were: Ali Shanan Nyef (Al Tufaili tribe), Sheikh Na'amah Salih Mahdi (Muslamawi -- and brother of the current governor), Fakhri Mansour Semawi (Khafaji), Amer Al-Gareer (Garee), Haider Al-Zanbour (Al bou Aqeel), Majid Felaifel (Janabi), Khalif Al-Janabi Janabi (Janabi), Fawaz Muther (Al Bou Taief), and Manfei Abbas (Al-Jebour). The sheikhs were told that the PM's office was forming "Support Councils" in each province. The support councils will consist of 20 members organized into four, five-man committees for security, national reconciliation, services, and returning IDPs. In Babil, the nine sheikhs will be founding members of the provincial support council and will nominate the additional 11 members. In turn, the council will nominate subcouncils at the qada and nahiya levels. The PM's office promised national government funding for the sheikhs in order to address the needs of their constituents in all four areas. Funding levels were not determined, but each of the sheikhs was given one million Iraqi Dinars (USD 900) as a sign of good faith.

[1](#)4. (C) In a separate July 22 meeting in Baghdad, Babil-based COR member Haider Karim Fahad al-Suweidi boasted to Poloff that nine Babil sheikhs and dignitaries had just formed an independent list with the blessing of Provincial Council Chairman Mohammed Masoudi. Al-Suweidi, like Masoudi an independent Shia, did not refer to "support councils" by name (majlis isnad) but mentioned several of the same sheikhs as Shnan. He was clearly proud of the effort to organize moderate Shia, technocrats, and tribal leaders into an

alliance that could rival the ISCI slate of Governor Salam Salah Mahdi al-Muslimawi. (Note: While independent, Al-Suweidi is ex-Da'wa and retains strong links. During conversation with Poloff, he was frequently interrupted via cellphone by Babil PC Deputy Chairman Dr. Na'ama Jasim - also Da'wa - to get updates on the provincial election law, which had been passed by COR hours earlier. End Note.) Haider mentioned that a similar arrangement was being organized in Wasit; he believed that the dynamics of Najaf and Karbala would make it harder to challenge the existing order.

Da'wa Organizing

15. (C) Comment: While Shnan and al-Suweidi emphasize their independence, several indicators suggest that the PM's office intends to develop "support councils" to standardize its efforts to organize and fund tribal leaders in the South and Central provinces to build broad support for the upcoming elections. Some of the Babil tribal leaders in the council are active Da'wa members, notably the Garee and both Janabi sheikhs. Others, such as the Khafaji and Jabur sheikhs, represent mixed Sunni-Shia tribes and can only be organized as independents. Organizing of tribal leaders by Maliki/Da'wa is nothing new: PRTs in Karbala, Diwaniyah, Basra, and Muthanna have noted similar recent efforts (see reftels). The prospect of the PM's office organizing the tribes has positive aspects; it builds coalitions across sectarian lines and pushes Da'wa to take a more moderate, secular stance. It is questionable, however, whether the PM's office will follow through with funding. Tribal chieftains in Basra were left disillusioned with Maliki when

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the GOI failed to provide additional aid after the Charge of the Knights. In any case, the attempt to establish a formal federal patronage system through the sheikhs represents a new development, elevating non-elected tribal leaders at the expense of elected officials. End Comment.
CROCKER